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Miss Carol Bowes  
Headteacher  
Tortworth VC Primary School  
Tortworth  
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Gloucestershire  
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Dear Miss Bowes

### **Short inspection of Tortworth VC Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 2 October 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in April 2015.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. As headteacher, you lead the school with care, determination and clear purpose. However, for reasons beyond your control, there has been a high staff turnover in recent years. You are mindful of the impact of this and you are doing everything you can to minimise the effects on pupils' learning. For instance, you have ensured that new staff are closely supported. This has enabled you to rapidly identify the need for additional training from the local authority. However, it will take time for new staff to develop the skills to fulfil their roles effectively.

Pupils say that teachers make lessons interesting, including using adventures in the outdoors. Parents and carers fully endorse this view. For example, a group of pupils have been exploring the book 'The hodgeheg'. They have improved their reading comprehension and developed their writing skills through a range of woodland curriculum activities. One hundred per cent of parents who responded to Parent View would recommend the school to others. Parents said, 'We couldn't ask for a better school' and 'The teachers here expect our children to do well. They help them with fantastic learning opportunities.' Pupils show good attitudes to learning in lessons. They make positive contributions through responding well to teachers' effective questioning. Staff build productive professional relationships with pupils and parents to promote a positive climate for learning.

The small numbers in each year group mean that it is not possible to determine a trend in your school's assessment information. However, you are aware that too few pupils are reaching the higher standards of attainment in mathematics by the end of

key stage 2. Work to address this, and improve pupils' progress in mathematics, is already under way. More is still to be done, especially to ensure that pupils in key stage 2 are consistently challenged in their work.

Improvements to assessment since your last inspection have resulted in teachers focusing more precisely on pupils' next steps in reading. Your careful monitoring of pupils' progress in reading allows teaching to be tailored to pupils' individual needs. Consequently, most pupils have every opportunity to improve their reading skills and understanding. In key stage 1, adult intervention is used well to develop pupils' independent reading. However, weak assessment for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities has resulted in some pupils not making strong enough progress from their various starting points.

Governors are passionate about the children and the community and genuinely care for the community they serve. They ensure that the small amount of pupil premium funding received by the school provides additional learning support and extra-curricular activities for disadvantaged pupils so they enjoy equal opportunities alongside their peers. However, governors have a limited understanding of how to evaluate pupils' progress. This hinders them from identifying the school priorities and holding you and other leaders to account. You are aware of this and have already taken steps to ensure that this area of governance is strengthened. Much of this work is moving in a positive direction but it is at too early a stage of implementation to determine its effect.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a strong safeguarding culture at your school. Governors understand the importance of safeguarding pupils and are effective in their duties. As a result, the local authority spring term safeguarding audit was overwhelmingly positive. All staff have received thorough safeguarding training that is updated regularly. This includes training about how to protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism. As a result, pupils are safe and any worries or concerns are reported and dealt with promptly. You have completed appropriate risk assessments for the adventurous activities available in your woodland areas. You agree that it is important that staff and pupils are clear about the expectations when accessing the outdoors in your rural location.

During the inspection, pupils' behaviour was good in lessons and at breaktime. Pupils feel safe and they are happy at school. They enjoy coming to school and do so on a regular basis. Consequently, pupils' attendance is currently higher than the school's target of 96%. School records demonstrate that incidents of poor behaviour are not common, and this is supported by pupils. Pupils commented on the fact that bullying is rare and that they feel confident that if they have any worries or concerns an adult would sort them out for them swiftly. Your pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. Pupils also spoke about how, through opportunities in the curriculum and assemblies, they are taught, at an age-appropriate level, about diversity and relationships. Pupils spoke about the work that you and other staff have done so that pupils can explore democracy in action. For instance, pupils have visited London to see the Houses of Parliament.

## Inspection findings

- The first area that I focused on during the inspection was the impact of leadership on improving standards in reading, writing and mathematics for all pupils. The school has several strengths. In reading, for example, from their different starting points, most children make strong progress during their time in your school. While listening to pupils read, I was impressed with how their fluency is developing and how they systematically use their phonics skills to unpick words that they find tricky. This is due to the high quality of the teaching and learning experiences provided for them. Pupils commented on how the wider range of reading materials available to them is encouraging them to read more and, as a result, make gains in their reading skills.
- In Reception, I observed children enthralled in mathematics activities that involved a range of well-planned activities and an extensive range of opportunities for children to continuously develop their physical and social skills. However, you are aware that more opportunities need to be planned so that children's skills can improve, particularly through further developing the outdoors to provide additional opportunities for children to practise and explore mathematics.
- Teaching in key stage 1 is strong and effective. Close and supportive relationships between adults and pupils and among the pupils themselves flourish. Current pupils are achieving well, and progress is steadily improving. Effective deployment of highly effective support staff and resources ensures that most pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are given good opportunities to catch up where it is needed.
- The quality of teaching in key stage 2 is too variable, particularly in securing high-quality writing in a range of subjects. Teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of writing across the curriculum. Pupils' poor letter formation, for example, is not acted upon swiftly enough. Not all pupils have opportunities to write at length. Consequently, some pupils do not make the progress the school expects of them. You have begun to implement specific sessions for pupils who need to catch up. This recently introduced approach is not fully embedded, and the improvements in writing are not reflected in pupils' independent work.
- Due to the weakness in mathematics, seen in your most recent published key stage 2 test information, you have identified and started to tackle key areas in the teaching of mathematics. You have strong subject knowledge and, through rigorous monitoring, you have accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses in mathematics teaching across the school. For example, you know that pupils' progress in mathematical fluency is strong, but reasoning and problem-solving is less well developed in key stage 2.
- My second line of enquiry focused on how effectively teachers use assessment to plan teaching and learning activities. This was highlighted in your previous inspection report as an area for improvement. Most teachers are using assessment and planning to improve their precision in their evaluation of pupils' progress. During our joint observations of learning, pupils were excited to check and improve their mathematics work. However, some adults' expectations of

what pupils can do and achieve are too low.

- My final line of enquiry explored the school's provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This was because the school has a higher proportion of pupils on the register of special educational needs compared to other schools nationally. Leaders ensure that additional funding is used to provide effective pastoral support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. You quickly seek support from outside agencies to successfully increase confidence of children in need of extra support in specific areas. For example, speech and language support has had a positive impact on improving the reading progress for some pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Some pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities find it difficult to catch up or make strong progress in key stage 2. This is often because teachers' planned 'next steps' are not refined or precise enough to meet the pupils' needs. Activities are too generic and do not take account of the most important elements needed to help pupils overcome specific barriers in their learning. Some activities planned for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are not broken down into the small steps required. As a result, some pupils find that the work set is too hard.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers plan pupils' next steps precisely to meet their needs, especially for those who have SEN and/or disabilities
- key stage 2 staff have the skills to teach mastery in mathematics and prioritise the development of pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for South Gloucestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Susan Costello  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and other leaders, including governors, to evaluate the impact of your work since the previous inspection. Together, we visited all classes in each phase of the school to evaluate the improvements asserted in current children's and pupils' assessment information. We discussed current pupils' assessment information and, together, we reviewed a wide range of work in pupils' books, particularly concentrating on achievements in mathematics and writing

throughout the school. I spoke to pupils, both formally and informally, about their learning and experiences of school. I listened to a group of pupils read. I read and scrutinised a wide range of school documentation, including the school self-evaluation document, the school's development plan and minutes from governors' meetings. I also scrutinised attendance information and documents relating to behaviour, safeguarding and child protection.

There were no responses to Ofsted's staff survey, and no pupils completed their survey. However, I took into account the 14 responses to Parent View.